



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Governor Warner announces early learning awareness campaign *~ First Lady Lisa Collis to highlight the importance of reading to children ~*

Richmond – Governor Mark R. Warner has announced an **Early Learning Campaign** that will run from Mother's Day, May 8th, until Father's Day, June 19th, to highlight the importance of early childhood education for children from birth through age 5. The Early Learning Campaign will consist of fun and educational activities throughout Virginia, hosted by community libraries, local departments of social service, public schools and other community partners addressing the needs of young children and families. For a list of activities, visit the Library of Virginia's Web site at <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whoweare/events/whatsnew.asp>.

Virginia First Lady Lisa Collis kicked off the statewide Early Learning Campaign today by participating in a children's story time at the **Richmond Main Library** in downtown Richmond. She also spoke about the critical role families play as the child's first teachers and about the importance that stimulation, play and reading have on the development of children from birth to age 5.

The campaign complements Gov. Mark Warner's **Early Childhood Summit** scheduled for May 25-26 and June 4th and 7th, which is a component of the Governor's Education for a Lifetime initiative. Research shows that children learn more between birth and age 3 than at any other time in their lives, and attention to early childhood learning and school readiness is directly related to creating a vital economy and prepared workforce for the future.

"Virginia is grappling with the reality that too many children come to school unprepared to learn, for many preventable reasons," said Jane Woods, Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources. "Through efforts such as the Early Learning Campaign and Early Childhood Summit, we resolve to prepare our children for success from the start. This is an opportunity that calls for hand-in-hand partnership among families, child care providers, business leaders and the broader community because we all benefit from the results."

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Early Learning Campaign Kick Off

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Summit activities will include:

- **Governor Warner's Leadership Luncheon** with key Virginia business and government leaders to discuss the economic impact of early childhood education in Virginia (May 26);
- **An Employer Strategy Session** with chief executives and senior human resource officers to learn about employee recruitment and retention strategies by addressing the child care needs of Virginia's workforce (May 25);
- **A Smart Strategies for Front Line Leaders session** for child care providers, which will include training devoted to sharpening their skills as business owners (June 4); and
- **A Learning Community for Early Childhood Partnership Session**, which will highlight innovative models, pilot programs and success stories of what communities in Virginia are doing to address early childhood development (June 7).

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